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ART. VI. — *A Universal and Critical Dictionary of the English Language ; to which are added Walker's Key to the Pronunciation of Classical and Scripture Proper Names, much enlarged and improved ; and a Pronouncing Vocabulary of Modern Geographical Names.* By JOSEPH E. WORCESTER. Boston : Wilkins, Carter, & Co. Imperial 8vo. pp. 955.

AT the beginning of the present century, a proposition for the publication of an American dictionary of the English language would have excited great amazement. The projecting of such a work, as a rival of the dictionaries of Johnson and Walker, would have caused great merriment among the scholars of England ; and any expectation cherished among us of superseding these authorities by a standard American dictionary would have been ridiculed by them, as a puerile attempt to embalm the American language with all its provincial peculiarities. Something of distrust, too, would have prevailed among the best scholars of the United States, who regarded English classical works as a part of their inheritance, and as models of style. It was not to be feared, indeed, that the diversity between England and the United States, in regard either to the written or spoken language, would ever become so remarkable as that between Spain and Portugal. The advancement of learning among us was so considerable, that such an apprehension would have been unreasonable. But fears not altogether groundless were entertained, both by American and English scholars, lest by inattention, or indifference, or a false notion of independence, there should be such a departure in the United States from English usage, either by the creation of new words, or by the use of words in new senses, or by combinations of words in violation of established idiom, as to produce great inconvenience in the intercourse between the parent country and the young confederacy, and a prejudice against us injurious to the growth of our literary reputation.

So early as 1789, Dr. Franklin, in a letter addressed to Noah Webster, cited several unauthorized words and phrases which had crept into our written language and parliamentary speeches, and advised him, in his future works for the cultivation of the English language, *to set a discountenancing mark*

upon such of them as were not required by the peculiar circumstances of our political institutions and local customs. Among the words strangely perverted, not only from the etymological, but from the secondary or metaphoric, signification, he instanced the word *improve*, as a verb denoting use or occupancy, applied both to persons and things. This was an old perversion of the word in New England, in its application to persons. It was thus used in the colonial laws of New Haven, about the middle of the seventeenth century. It was ordered, that the magistrates or other suitable officers should see that parents and masters provided means for teaching their children and apprentices "to read the Scriptures and other good and profitable printed books in the English tongue, by *improving* schoolmasters or other helps." Similar examples might be multiplied. At a later period, the word was applied to the use or occupancy of houses and lands. Such a use of the word was common at the beginning of the present century ; but we do not remember to have seen or heard it in this sense for many years.

Mr. Webster, no doubt, received the caution of Dr. Franklin with respect ; but he was ever apt to touch with a lenient hand the trespasses of his countrymen against the established usages of standard English writers. In his large dictionary, he gives, as the sixth and last meaning of the verb *improve*, "to use, to occupy" ; as in the example, — "The house or farm is now improved by an industrious tenant." But in the peculiar New England use of the word, it mattered not whether the tenant were industrious or slothful, careful or wasteful. The word *industrious*, in the example, so qualifies the character of the tenant, as to countenance the legitimate meaning of the verb ; namely, *bettering* the premises. We do not suppose that Mr. Webster aimed to procure favor for the word, in its perverted sense, by stealth ; although, by his remark subjoined to the example, he does not *set a discountenancing mark* upon it. "This application," he says, "is *perhaps* peculiar to some parts of the United States. It, however, deviates little from that in some of the foregoing definitions."

Among the literary gentlemen of Boston and Cambridge there arose, near the beginning of the present century, a vigilance for the preservation of the English language in its purity, which deserves to be kept in remembrance, as a part

of the literary history of the country. Several of them united in forming an association for literary intercourse, and for conducting a periodical and miscellaneous journal, which they entitled *The Monthly Anthology*. Among the associates were John S. Gardiner, William Emerson, John T. Kirkland, William Tudor, Arthur M. Walter, Joseph S. Buckminster, Samuel C. Thacher, and others, some of whom still survive. All here named, except Dr. Gardiner, who was educated in England, and those not named, with two or three exceptions, received their discipline in English composition at Harvard College, under the rigid inspection of Dr. Pearson, an exact grammatical and logical critic. What they had well begun they pursued with ardor. Many of them were eminent scholars, and widely conversant with the Greek and Latin, as well as the English, classics. In their associated authority they visited with severe criticism contemporaneous publications of professional and literary men, not overlooking single occasional sermons, and orations delivered before large assemblies on national festive days, and before literary and charitable associations. In this way their critical commentaries reached a large portion of our educated men, who were thus put upon their guard with a degree of strictness corresponding to that exercised by the sentinels.

Contemporaneously with the endeavours of the associated conductors of the *Anthology*, in the capital of New England, to preserve the purity of the English language, we were admonished, in a manner sometimes friendly and sometimes supercilious, of our degeneracy in the use of our mother tongue, by writers in the British journals. In whatever spirit the admonitions were administered, their operation was salutary in the end. If the authors of them were hypercritical, we had scholars who were competent to expose their exaggerations. If they drew general conclusions from few examples, we were able to show the fallacy of their inferences.

The *Edinburgh Review*, in the period of its youth (October, 1804), took notice of Marshall's and Ramsay's *Lives of Washington*. The reviewers said, — “ We have found *a great many words and phrases* which English criticism refuses to acknowledge.” To show that they were not influenced by jealousy or pride, they added generous and enlarged wishes and anticipations in regard to the prosperity and glory of the United States, to the triumphs

therein of the English language, and to the alliance of interest and affection between the two countries. "But," they said, "if the men of birth and education in that other England, which they are building up in the west, will not diligently study the great authors who purified and fixed the language of our common forefathers, we must soon lose the only badge that is still worn of our consanguinity."

For several succeeding years, we continued to receive warning and advice from writers in various British periodical publications, in relation to the purity and integrity of our common language. The American works which gave occasion to their remarks were few in number. Marshall's, Ramsay's, and Bancroft's biographies of Washington, Pinckney's *Travels through France*, and Stoddard's *Sketches of Louisiana*, were among the prominent books that fell under their notice.

The *British Critic* (1808), in a review of Marshall, says, — "We have often discovered, in the writings of Americans, deviations from the purity of the English idiom, which we have been more disposed to censure than to wonder at. The common speech of the United States has departed very considerably from the standard adopted in England. Mr. Marshall deviates occasionally, but not grossly." In the same work, two years later, the reviewers of Bancroft's *Life of Washington* say, — "We observe with regret rather than with astonishment the introduction of several new words, or old words in a new sense; a deviation from the rules of the English language, which, if it continues to be practised by good writers in America, will introduce confusion into the medium of intercourse, and render it a subject of regret that the people should not have an entirely separate language."

The *Critical Review* (1807), speaks more disparagingly of Marshall's style than does the *British Critic*, saying, that "it *abounds* with many of those idioms which prevail on the other side of the Atlantic."

The *Annual Review* (1808), after commenting upon the faults of Marshall, concludes with a harsh, indiscriminate censure of the American writers, spiced with a sly sarcasm for the benefit of the *Yankee nation*. "We have been more particular," say the reviewers, "in noticing the faults of Mr. Marshall's language, because we are not at all certain that the Americans do not consider them as beauties; and because

we wish, if possible, to stem that torrent of barbarous phraseology, with which the American writers threaten to destroy the purity of the English language."

All these things, and more like them, were written before the sarcastic question, "Who reads an American book?" was propounded. How far the critics were conscious of magnifying the danger which seemed to threaten the purity of the English language, as written and spoken in the United States, and whether they did not affect a good deal, in respect to the extent of the fears which they expressed lest its identity with genuine English should be lost or destroyed, we will not undertake to decide. Nor is it of any importance that we should. There is no reason to think that they combined for the purpose of exciting a causeless alarm. In regard to danger there was no question. It had already begun; and the true question was about the degree, and how it was to be arrested. It was a matter of mutual interest; and if some of us were too sensitive under rebuke, for the moment, we were wise enough afterwards to con it in private, and not subject ourselves to its repetition.

On the other hand, the English critics knew, that, while we were daily feasting on the classic productions of our fatherland, we were also advancing in literature, in the arts and sciences, and in a more critical study and careful use of the common language. After all, they must have been aware that occasional deviations from the English standard would occur, entitled, if they were not wilful, to as much indulgence as was claimed by Beattie, Campbell, and Burke, for their national peculiarities in the use of words and phrases.

To show the true state of the case in regard to departure from English usage in the written and spoken language of our countrymen, that eminent scholar, the late John Pickering, after making the subject a diligent study among his other various avocations, communicated to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences the result of his investigations, which was inserted in its *Memoirs* in 1815. In the following year he published the communication in a separate volume, "with corrections and additions." The book is entitled, — "A Vocabulary, or Collection of Words and Phrases, which have been supposed to be peculiar to the United States of America: to which is prefixed an Essay on the Present State of the English Language in the United States."

In his preface to the Vocabulary, Mr. Pickering says, — “I began the practice of occasionally noting *Americanisms* and expressions of doubtful authority, for my own use, during my residence in London ; which was from the close of the year 1799 to the autumn of 1801.” At the beginning of this period, he was twenty-three years old, and had already gained the well deserved reputation of a distinguished classical scholar. It was not until several years after his return from London, that he formed the plan of his Vocabulary. But the materials which he had preserved, his extensive reading, and his habits of observation, together with his critical accuracy and literary ardor, lead us to believe that his Vocabulary is as comprehensive, in respect to the words and phrases then supposed to be peculiar to the United States, as could be expected in a first attempt to collect them. The work was very useful, not only by enabling our writers and public speakers to correct errors of language already existing, but by exciting such attention to the subject as to prevent the accumulation of local peculiarities. These effects were very manifest. At the same time, it was gratifying to find, that the charges made against us, in regard to our abuses of the English language, were greatly exaggerated.

A period of one generation has passed since this Vocabulary was published, and we have now carefully examined it. The examination has led to some facts relating to the history of the English language during this period, which appear to us worthy of being recorded.

The whole number of new words, single and compounded, of American origin, contained in the Vocabulary, is about eighty ; certainly less than a hundred, including the *cant* and *vulgar* words, not used by good writers in grave discourse. Of these, a few are words contained in English dictionaries, but not used by British writers. Several are such as had been used by a single American writer ; namely, *alienism*, *Americanize*, *anxietude*, &c., which have not been adopted. Joel Barlow was probably the greatest offender of this kind. Another considerable portion consists of words analogically formed, which do not endanger the purity of language, and may be used or avoided according to the taste of the writer or speaker. Of this class are *accountability*, *christianization*, *constitutional*, *noticeable*, *profanity*, *educational*. Our political and religious institutions, and peculiar local customs

and usages, have given rise to a considerable number of such words. Of the remaining supposed new words, being, for the most part, old words revived, or verbs made from nouns without any change of form, — a process admitting, indeed, an indefinite addition to the English vocabulary, — the number censured as Americanisms is not large. The most remarkable fact concerning Mr. Pickering's Vocabulary is, that the very *Americanisms* which were most ridiculed, loathed, and scorned by British critics, at the time of its publication, and for several preceding years, have, with few exceptions, been adopted by them, and been fairly incorporated into the English language; and this, too, after they had been so stigmatized and branded by these critics as vile intruders, that we, from very shame, had shunned them as unworthy of admission into good company. The following verbs, for example, particularly those in Italics, would not have been viewed by a British critic five-and-thirty years ago, without a sneer: — *advocate*, *base* and *bottom* (in the sense of *found*, as “based or bottomed upon solid principles”), *debark*, *derange*, *immigrate*, *progress*, *test*. In the English Monthly Review, about that time, the following sentence is cited from “A Political Sketch of America,” intended to ridicule the style of our writers: — “Were it not for my *destitution* of leisure, which obliges me to hasten to the *occlusion* of these pages, as I *progress*, I should *bottom* my assertion on instances from authors of the first *grade*; but were I to render my sketch *lengthy*, I should *illy* answer my purpose.” By such a foolish juxtaposition of words it is easy to ridicule the style of any author. Of the seven words censured in this paltry attempt to be witty, only two deserve condemnation when properly associated with other words. *Destitution* is not a bad word, and it may as lawfully be used now as it was long since by Hooker and Taylor. We should prefer the Saxon *want* in most cases. *Destitution*, however, has a more restricted meaning, as it implies personal, absolute poverty. To time, or leisure, which is common to all persons, it is not properly applicable. *Occlusion*, which is a mere dictionary word, was retained by Johnson without being illustrated by any examples of its use. We know not of any American authority for its use, except that of Thomas Jefferson, who, in the year 1802, spoke of “the *occlusion* of the port of New Orleans by the Spaniards.” We doubt whether any other respecta-

ble writer in the United States used it afterwards without a sneer, from which the wisdom and dignity of the author could not secure him. *Progress* and *bottom* as verbs, *grade*, and *lengthy*, have gained full admission into the English vocabulary. *Illy*, the use of which is not unexampled in England, and was formerly common in the United States, is now universally discarded by good writers.

New words have been introduced more sparingly by American than by English writers and public speakers. While we are able to vindicate ourselves against the charge of corrupting the language to any considerable extent in this particular, we must plead guilty to the charge of perverting the true sense of several words, and of departing, in some instances, from established English idioms. But in these respects we have not proved incorrigible, and the charge can no longer be sustained against our best writers and public speakers, to an alarming degree. More parliamentary corruptions of speech, of recent origin, can be traced to British statesmen than to those of our country; such, for instance, as *reliable*, *industrial*, *feature* — as applied to the several details of a bill. And, in general, the well educated men of England have multiplied words borrowed from foreign terms, or regularly formed from radical words in their own language, to a much greater extent than men of the same class in the United States.*

* Our readers may like to have a sample of the neologisms recently introduced into our language by writers of good authority, or in periodical works of high repute, in England. Opening Mr. Worcester's dictionary at random, and turning over but few pages, we have found the following words which are given with the authorities annexed. Not one of them is to be found in Todd's edition of Johnson.

Guardianize, Quarterly Review; *gullible*, W. Scott; *gustatory*, Edinburgh Review; *gutturality*, Seward; *gyral*, Ed. Review; *hagiocracy*, Eclectic Review; *hagiology*, Chas. Butler; *half-hearted*, Southey; *hallucinatory*, Ed. Review; *hang*, [a steep declivity,] Loudon; *harassment*, Ec. Review; *hardish*, Scott; *harlequinade*, Ed. Review; *heathendom*, Ed. Review; *heathery*, Quar. Review; *Hellenization*, Athenæum; *hemorrhagic*, Monthly Review; *heptarch*, J. M. Good; *heraldical*, Gent. Magazine; *heraldically*, Quar. Review; *herder*, [herdsman,] Monthly Review; *hereditability*, Sir E. Brydges; *hero-errant*, Quar. Review; *heroicalness*, Scott; *heroicness*, Montague; *hesitative*, Smart; *hierocracy*, Southey; *hierolatry*, Coleridge; *Hispanicism*, Ed. Review; *honorific*, For. Quar. Review; *horizontalty*, Philosophical Journal; *horrify*, Eclectic Review; *dietist*, Quar. Review; *dilative*, Coleridge; *diplomate*, West. Review.

The list might be indefinitely extended; but we have given enough to account for the tender anxiety with which our critical brethren across the water watch over the purity of the English language.

Still, we are willing to acknowledge all the faults that are proved against us, and all that can be detected of which we are not aware. We would much rather correct than defend what is wrong. If we are in the habit of saying, we *admire* to do or have a thing, or go to a place; that we *calculate* to perform an act; that our neighbour *conducts* ill; if a clerk *notifies* persons to meet, instead of notifying a meeting to the persons; if the members of a school-committee, in a thinly peopled village, fix upon a spot for a school-house that will best *convene* the inhabitants; all we can say is, let us break off such habits of speaking, and use words in their true meaning. Faults like these are for the most part confined to the illiterate, or indulged in by those who, though better informed, adapt themselves, in their colloquial phraseology, to the people with whom they associate on terms of equality.

So far as we can judge of the present state of the English language in the United States, we can see no reason why a man of liberal education and competent abilities, who has applied himself diligently to the critical study of the English language, and is furnished with the proper helps for his work, may not challenge the confidence of the reading public by as fair a title as if he were born and educated in England. There is a common literature in the two countries. We can command all the standard works of English authors in the arts, sciences, and polite literature, and are able to appreciate, according to their value, all their philological labors.

Mr. Worcester's *Universal Dictionary* demands respectful examination, on account of his previous valuable labors in lexicography, and of its importance as a work more comprehensive in its vocabulary than any preceding English dictionary. And here it is due to the author, and to the public, that we should state, in a few words, the advantages under which he has prepared this elaborate work.

It is now about twenty years since his services were procured, on account of his well known diligence, fidelity, and exactness in literary labors, as the editor of a dictionary entitled "*Johnson's English Dictionary, as improved by Todd and abridged by Chalmers; with Walker's Pronouncing Dictionary combined; to which is added Walker's Key to the Classical Pronunciation of Greek, Latin, and Scripture Proper Names.*" The plan of this compilation was fixed before the work was begun. The dictionary was published in the year 1828.

Several slender attempts had been made, by different authors, to supply the deficiencies of Johnson's vocabulary, before the publication of Todd's first edition (1814), which contains above fourteen thousand words more than are found in Johnson's abridgment. From this edition of Todd the abridgment of Chalmers was made. But the second edition of Todd (February, 1827) was received here in season for the insertion of the additional words it contained — amounting to about a thousand — in Mr. Worcester's Appendix. This great increase of words, formed, at the time of Todd's labors, a far more extensive English vocabulary than any that had preceded it. Still, it does not appear that the author prided himself so much upon the number of words he added, as upon the sources from which he derived them. He cited nearly eight hundred authors as authorities for the various words with which his dictionary was enriched, and thus showed an extent of reading and research greatly to his praise. "I might have omitted," he says, "some citations from modern writers. But the canons yet remain to be promulgated, by which the extremes of opposite tastes are to be settled. The precise time at which antiquity is to be regarded as a rule is not yet determined. The standard 'one inclines to remove to the distance of a century and a half; another may, with as good reason, fix it three centuries backwards; and another six.'" In Mr. Todd's long catalogue of authorities, we trace a succession from Chaucer down to the contemporaries of the lexicographer. Much, however, he thought remained to be accomplished, not only in regard to the vocabulary, but in the selection of examples, in etymology, in definition, and in orthography, in order to make "a beautiful whole, a standard of pure and exact phraseology"; a work requiring, in his opinion, a division of labor among industrious and learned men.

Mr. Worcester inserted the words from Walker's dictionary which were not contained in Chalmers; and when he perceived defects in Chalmers, which it was important to supply, in respect to etymology, definitions, or critical remarks, he inserted from Johnson or Todd the necessary additional matter. The most laborious and responsible part of the editor's work was that of applying Walker's principles of pronunciation to the fifteen thousand words in Todd's dictionary, which are not found in Walker's. After acquaint-

ing himself thoroughly with these principles, as he manifestly did, the labor of applying them to most of the new words was, in a manner, mechanical, requiring only careful attention. But, as he justly remarked in his Preface, "a considerable number of the additional words, some of them words now out of use, others local or provincial, and rarely found in books, and others from foreign languages, and not Anglicized, presented more or less difficulty. Respecting those words with regard to which Walker's method failed to furnish him with a guide, the Editor has availed himself of such other aids as he could obtain ; but some words he has left unpronounced, and with respect to some to which he has added the pronunciation, he may have fallen into error."

One other important portion of Mr. Worcester's labor in editing Todd's Johnson deserves notice, as a part of his preparation of materials for future use in a dictionary upon his own plan ; namely, the addition of other authorities in words of doubtful pronunciation, where orthoëpists differ. Walker in such cases made liberal use of those who preceded him. In regard to words variously pronounced, he says, — "The only method of knowing the extent of custom in these cases seems to be the inspection of those dictionaries which professedly treat of pronunciation. An exhibition of the opinion of orthoëpists about the sound of words always appeared to me a very rational method of determining what is called custom. This method I have adopted." Mr. Worcester pursued the method still farther, and applied it particularly to the words respecting which Walker had failed to exhibit the difference between his own pronunciation and that of other dictionaries. In addition to the works cited by Walker, Mr. Worcester made use of Perry's "Synonymous, Etymological, and Pronouncing Dictionary," which was published in 1805, the year before the last edition of Walker that was revised by himself was printed. To this edition of Perry's work it does not appear that Walker referred in any instance. It differs in the pronunciation of many words from Perry's "Royal Standard English Dictionary," and agrees frequently with Walker, where the other differs from him.

We may as well remark here, that Mr. Worcester, in his "Universal and Critical Dictionary," has adhered to the same plan of citing authorities differing from his own notation, under increased advantages ; because, as he remarks, "most

of the works which are made use of as authorities have been published since his time." These are the dictionaries of Enfield, Jameson, Knowles, Smart, Reid, and Webster, besides Perry's, the title of which has already been given. We may here add, as our belief, that Mr. Worcester possesses a more numerous and valuable collection of books relating to English lexicography than any other individual in the United States ; perhaps we might say, than any public library.

Before Mr. Worcester had completed his edition of the abridgment of Todd's Johnson, and while the work was in progress, he formed the plan of his "Comprehensive Pronouncing and Explanatory Dictionary." But he was destined again to engage in a work of severe, servile labor, before advancing far in that of which he was the sole projector. He was induced to undertake an abridgment of Dr. Webster's quarto dictionary, published in 1828, according to the principles and rules prescribed by the author. It was an undertaking of great delicacy, and was attended with much perplexity, from circumstances on which, we suppose, it would not become us to make any comments. He persevered, however, and accomplished the work of abridgment, if not to his own satisfaction or that of the author, in a manner which received the approbation of the author's best friends. This work was published in 1829.

Mr. Worcester's "Comprehensive Pronouncing and Explanatory Dictionary of the English Language, with Pronouncing Vocabularies of Classical and Scripture Proper Names," was published in 1830. It is a convenient manual in regard to its size, and answers truly to its title. It attracted immediate notice, and was received with remarkable favor. No English dictionary since its publication has, we believe, been so extensively used as a manual, or so much relied upon as an authority. Besides the native men of learning in the United States who pronounced a decided judgment in its favor, it was spoken of in terms of strong approbation by an English classical scholar, a learned physician, and the author of a valuable "Medical Dictionary," — Professor Dunglison, of the University of Virginia. He said, soon after its appearance, — "I can, without hesitation, award to this dictionary the merit of being best adapted to the end in view of any I have examined. It is, in other words, the best portable pronouncing and explanatory dictionary that I have seen, and as such is deserving of very extensive circulation."

We are told by Mr. Worcester, in the Preface to his *Universal Dictionary*, that, after he began his preparation for the smaller work, of which we have just spoken, he “adopted the practice of recording all the English words which he met with, used by respectable authors, and not found in Todd’s edition of Johnson’s Dictionary.” Such was his careful observation in the course of his wide reading, that his record grew with great rapidity. He found his collection of words constantly accumulating, and after a while determined to prepare “a new and larger dictionary.” Continuing the practice of noting new words until he had prepared his *Universal Dictionary* for the press, and through the progress of printing it, we may well suppose that he has nearly exhausted the unregistered stock. But we doubt not that he has already met with words not a few, which are not inserted in his vocabulary. It is but a few hours since we saw a newspaper paragraph concerning the saving of manuscript records, relating to the history of Georgia, from the wreck of a vessel in which they were shipped from Liverpool; of which records the writer says, — “They were sent in their wet and *sobby* condition to New York.” Todd and Worcester have, “sob, *v. a.* to soak; to sop [a cant word],” but have not this derivative.

Scriptural and *unscriptural* occur in a letter of Samuel Davidson, dated Lancashire Independent College, giving his reasons for withdrawing from the “Evangelical Alliance” lately formed at London. *Respelling* we find in Mr. Worcester’s Introduction to his Dictionary. We have now said enough concerning Mr. Worcester’s preparations for his *Universal Dictionary* to show that the work contains the results of long-continued and painstaking study. He has a right to consider it, in terms less reserved than those he employs, as a new dictionary.

“The Dictionary of Johnson,” he says, “as corrected and enlarged by Todd, and Walker’s Critical Pronouncing Dictionary, have been made, in some degree, the basis of the present work; but the words found in those dictionaries have been revised with much labor and care in relation to their orthography, pronunciation, etymology, definition, &c.; and a great part of them, especially such as relate to the arts and sciences, have been defined entirely anew.

“To the words found in Todd’s edition of Johnson’s Dictionary

nearly twenty-seven thousand more have been added, and for all these authorities are given, except a few, such as the participial adjectives *amusing*, *entertaining*, *established*, &c. All the verbs of the language that are often met with, both regular and irregular, are conjugated ; and the preterits and perfect participles of the irregular verbs are inserted separately, in their alphabetical places ; but of the regular verbs, the present and perfect participles are not inserted as separate articles. If this had been done, as it has been in several other dictionaries [Webster's, for example], it would have added upwards of ten thousand more articles to the vocabulary."

The words added by Mr. Worcester, and not found in Todd's Johnson, are denoted by an asterisk. Besides those gathered from his miscellaneous reading and from English dictionaries, he has taken the technical and scientific terms from various scientific works, dictionaries of arts and sciences, and encyclopædias. For authorities, he says, "in many instances, the names of English authors have been chosen in preference to the names of American authors of equal or even higher respectability ; inasmuch as it is satisfactory to many readers to know, in relation to a new, uncommon, or doubtful word, that it is not peculiar to American writers." At the same time he has not inserted indiscriminately all the words that he has found in English writers, even of those held in good repute ; and to many that he has inserted he has annexed some term of disapprobation. Still, his vocabulary is doubtless more comprehensive than that which is contained in all the dictionaries of the English language collectively. It is an encyclopædia of words.

The time has gone by for discussing the propriety of introducing technical words into a dictionary of the English language. Dr. George Campbell, author of the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, a penetrating philosophical critic, maintained the opinion that technical words are not to be considered as part of a language, and that they are not entitled, in general, to admission into a dictionary claiming the character of a standard. The explanation of such words must therefore be sought for in cyclopædias and dictionaries of arts and sciences. Campbell, it may be, was led to adopt the opinion he entertained by finding how little had been done in regard to the insertion and explanation of these words in the general dictionaries of the English language. Johnson, however, seems to have admitted the propriety of inserting them. From books of science

and technical dictionaries he professed to have collected such as he could find, and to have admitted others, sometimes with hesitation, on the authority of a single writer. But what he accomplished in this particular is now of little value. Technical and scientific terms have, since his time, become very numerous ; and many things pertaining to the arts and sciences have, for the benefit of general readers, become so *popularized* (if we may use this word, admitted by Mr. Worcester on the authority of the Edinburgh Review), that an explanation of such words has become important, and is no longer a question of expediency.

Words which English authors had introduced in consequence, as Dr. Johnson said, of " their knowledge of foreign languages, or ignorance of their own," he inserted as he chanced to meet them, but commonly, as he remarked, " to censure them, and to warn others against the folly of naturalizing useless foreigners to the injury of the natives." Compounded or double words he introduced sparingly ; and words formed according to uniform analogy he noted as they casually occurred, but did not search for them, " because, their relation to the primitive being always the same, their signification cannot be mistaken."

Here is a wide field, which was but little explored by Dr. Johnson, and has been constantly becoming more fruitful. We can fix no limits to its productiveness. Every thing in this world is, indeed, finite ; but when we look at the ever increasing number of abstract nouns ending in *ness* and *ity*, of adjectives ending in *al*, *ive*, *able*, and *ible*, and of adverbs in *ly*, all of which are among the most common derivative formations, we can see no end to the increase. We here exemplify the expansion of the English vocabulary in some of these derivative formations, without seeking for remarkable instances : —

CONVENTION : conventional, conventionalism, conventionalist, conventionality, conventionally, conventioner, conventionist.

CONTEMPORARY : contemporariness, contemporaneous, contemporaneousness, contemporaneously, contemporaneity.

CONTEMPT : contemptible, contemptibility, contemptibleness, contemptibly.

RELY : reliable, reliability.

PERISH : perishable, perishability, perishableness, perishment.

EDUCATE : education, educational, educationist, educator, educable, educability.

IMPUGN : impugner, impugnable, impugnment.

ONTOLOGY : ontologist, ontologic, ontological, ontologically.

From these eight primitive words we here find thirty-five derivatives, and of this number twenty-three are inserted by Mr. Worcester, which are not found in Todd's Johnson, or, as we suppose, in any other English dictionary. They take their place, however, on the authority of learned and respectable writers.

To this source of accession to the "World of English Words," as Edward Phillips, nearly two centuries ago, entitled his dictionary, in which terms of Astrology, Magic, Heraldry, Mythology, and Hawking, "hard words" from other languages, proper names, and other matters, were mingled in strange juxtaposition, we may add the constant improvements, discoveries, and inventions in the arts and sciences ; the vast extension of the commerce of Great Britain and the United States with other nations ; the increasing personal intercourse of the inhabitants of those countries with the people of the continent of Europe ; the consequent interchange of customs, fashion, and literature ; and the journals and itineraries which record whatever is peculiar to the countries visited by English and American travellers ; — and it may be that a few years only will pass, before we shall have a vocabulary of a hundred thousand words, instead of seventy or eighty thousand. And there is no occasion for much alarm at such a prospect. The multiplication of words has hitherto produced no distraction among writers and public speakers of literary taste and acquirements, nor will it hereafter. Now and then, a useless word of recent origin or recent revival will enjoy its brief period of fashion, until men of taste, sickened by the sound, as it is constantly uttered by lips that use or abuse it, will reject it with disgust.

While Mr. Worcester has included in his vocabulary most of the words he has found in the productions of respectable writers, on some of which, however, he *sets a discountenancing mark*, we do not find that he has excluded any which have heretofore been admitted into dictionaries, and are en-

titled to respect. He does not belong to the corps of militant etymologists, who war against custom, which establishes the laws of language. On the contrary, he pays due fealty to these laws, and gives no countenance to a revolutionary spirit. We have discovered no instance in which he has changed the orthography of a word to make it conform to an assumed theory. In these respects, he has, wherever we have traced him, shown that fidelity to our language as he found it, which makes him worthy of entire confidence.

Dictionaries are made not so much for the learned as for the learner and the general reader. We cannot but think, that whatever is done by a lexicographer to disturb what is settled by common practice and consent is unwise and pedantic. For instance, we have long been in possession of the word *systematize*, which happened to be formed immediately from the Greek substantive ending in *alpha*, instead of the Anglicized substantive *system*. In like manner we have *dogmatize* and *stigmatize* from the Greek termination of *dogma* and *stigma*. Dr. Webster chose to derive from *system* the verb *systemize*, which he inserted without any comment, and excluded *systematize*. But he inserted *systematic*, *systematical*, and *systematically*. Why should he not have boldly carried out his process, and have given us *systemic*, *systemical*, and *systemically*? We hold a critic who thus tampers with our vocabulary guilty of culpable oversight, or of a high philological misdemeanour. Again, the word *sovereign* is always spelled in one and the same way by educated people; but Dr. Webster says, —“ We retain this barbarous orthography from the Norman *souveraign*. The true spelling would be *suveran*. *Fr. souverain*, &c.” Accordingly, he inserted *suveran* in its alphabetical place, as the approved orthography, and illustrated its use with the word preserved in the same form. The only comment he makes is, — “ The barbarous Norman word *souveraign* seems to be formed of L. *super* and *regnum*; a strange blunder.” The adoption of such etymological vagaries into the body of a dictionary entirely destroys its usefulness as a work of reference. Though they may be comparatively few in number, the book ceases to be trustworthy in any case; for the inquirer can never be sure but that the particular word he is searching for is one of those over which the lexicographer has exercised his usurped authority.

As an introduction to his dictionary, Mr. Worcester has prefixed several brief essays, clear and succinct in style, and at the same time sufficiently comprehensive, on the following subjects :—1. Principles of Pronunciation ; 2. Orthography ; 3. English Grammar ; 4. Origin, Formation, and Etymology of the English Language ; 5. Archaisms, Provincialisms, and Americanisms ; 6. History of English Lexicography.

In treating of pronunciation, Mr. Worcester begins with that *crux criticorum*, as every author of a pronouncing dictionary must feel it to be, the key to the vowel sounds, denoted by certain marks or figures to be annexed to the vowels in all the words in the vocabulary. It is doubtless difficult for any orthoëpist fully to satisfy himself in this matter, and it is very certain he cannot perfectly convey his own ideas of all the minute distinctions of sound to other persons. The inconstancy of our vowel sounds, and the great diversity that in many words exists between the orthography and the pronunciation, render it difficult to apply, to its full extent, a system of notation by arbitrary marks. English, says La Harpe, would be half French, were it not for its “*inconceivable pronunciation*.” “The extreme viciousness of the English pronunciation seems to be in conflict with the articulation of the human voice.” This is more vivacious than philosophical. Our pronunciation cannot appear more vicious to Frenchmen, or to conflict more with natural articulation, than theirs does to us.

We will not undertake to say how the present race of critics in France speak of the irregularities of their own language ; but one of the French Encyclopedists drew a picture of the contrariety between its orthography and its pronunciation, which we should consider greatly exaggerated as a picture of the English language.

“It has happened,” he says, “by the alterations which rapidly succeed each other in pronunciation, and by the corrections which are slowly introduced in writing, that the pronunciation and writing do not correspond. And though societies of men of letters have been charged with the business of reducing them to rules, so as to harmonize together, they are still found to be at an inconceivable distance from each other ; so that two things, which in their origin were imagined faithfully to represent one another, differ not much less than the portraits of the same person at very distant periods of his life. In fine, the disagreement has become

so excessive, that no one dares to attempt a remedy. We pronounce one language; we write another; and being accustomed, during the remainder of life, to the inconsistencies which have caused us so many tears in childhood, if we should renounce our bad orthography for one nearer to the pronunciation, we should not be able to recognize our spoken language under the new combination of characters."

Mr. Worcester's key to the sounds of the vowels exhibits a more minute analysis than that of Walker. This is a dry subject for commentary, and ours shall be very brief.

Walker's Key represents but four sounds of the letter *a*; namely, the long slender English sound, as in *fate*; the long Italian, as in *far*; the broad German, as in *fall*; and the short Italian, as in *fat*. To these Mr. Worcester adds *a* long before *r*, as heard in *fare*, *rare*, *pair*, and *bear*. It may not be amiss to remark, that *bear* has an anomalous pronunciation. We have the same sound in *pear*, *swear*, *wear*, and perhaps a few other words of the same class, which do not occur to us. But the common sound of *ea* before *r*, is that which is familiar to us in *clear*, *dear*, *dear*, *fear*, *gear*, &c. But words having the same form as *fare* and *pair* have uniformly, if we mistake not, the same sound of *a* that is denoted by these words. For want of marking this variety in the sound of *a*, Walker has sometimes given to words of this form the long sound of *a* in *hate*, and sometimes that of *a* in *hat*, where neither represents the true sound, and consequently the reader is liable to be misled. It is not probable that Walker pronounced the word *rare* with the long slender English sound of *a* in *fate*; but his notation so teaches. Nor do we believe that he considered this sound as applied to the *a* in *parent* any thing more than an approximation. Unfortunately, some persons, who have looked for perfection in his representation of vowel sounds, have acquired the habit of an affected pronunciation of this word, and others of the same class, such as *apparent*, *care*, *careful*, *fare*, *farewell*.

It cannot be doubted that Walker, who had analyzed very carefully the vowel sounds as affected by the consonants, perceived the peculiarity of sound occasioned by *r* following the vowel, in examples like those we have cited; although we do not find it remarked upon in his critical examination of the power of the letters. Mr. Worcester has done good

service in this addition to the key of the vowel. The propriety of the other addition to his key, that of *a* intermediate, having neither the short sound, as in *fat*, nor the Italian, as in *far*, we think is apparent. This sound is denoted in the key by the arbitrary vowel mark on the words *fast*, *branch*, *grasp*, and *grass*. To the vowel in these words, and others of the same class, Walker gives the short sound. The Italian sound of *a* in such words, which we generally hear from those who have bestowed little care upon pronunciation, it appears to us, approaches nearer to the true sound than that which is noted by Walker.

To the letter *e* Walker gives in his table of vowel sounds only the common long and short sounds, as in *me* and *met*. Mr. Worcester adds *e*, like *a* in *rare*, exemplified in *heir*, *there*, *where*. Here, again, the imperfection of Walker's notation appears. For the purpose of indicating the sound of the vowel, he spells these words with *a* long, as in *fate*; and the last of them, in the following awkward manner, — *hware* and *hware-az*. He probably never distorted his mouth so as to pronounce them according to this orthography. Another addition in Mr. Worcester's key to the same letter is what he calls the short and obtuse sound, as in *her*, *herd*, *fern*, *fervid*. Some of these, also, for the sake of indicating the true sound, Walker was obliged to spell with a different vowel. Thus *her* is directed to be pronounced *hur*, like *u* in *tub*. But we cannot come at this sound with the vowel before *r*, except by the help of another syllable, as in *hur-ry*. Whether we gain any thing by such a process, every one can judge. It is pretty certain, however, that no orthoëpist has skill enough to lead one astray in pronouncing the word. Not exactly thus is it with *herd*, to which Walker gives the short vowel sound, like *e* in *met*. It is possible, by very labored self-training, to give to this word the strange and indescribable sound which we have heard in the utterance of *earth*, *erth*, with short *e*, — a sound so difficult, that Walker proposed it with many grains of allowance, and for the sake of guarding against "a coarse, vulgar pronunciation, as if written *urth*. There is, indeed," he says, "but a delicate difference between this and the true sound, but quite sufficient to distinguish a common from a polite speaker."

Thus it appears, that Walker's table of sounds, in regard as well to the letter *e* as to the letter *a*, is not sufficiently

complete to indicate all the legitimate sounds, and that he was obliged to recur to indirect methods to supply what was wanting.

To the letter *i* Walker assigns only one long and one short sound. Mr. Worcester adds the sound of long *e*, as in *machine*, *police*, *mien*, *marine*. Words in which *i* has this sound are not very numerous. They are derived generally from modern European languages, most of them from the French, and retain the foreign sound of the vowel. He also adds what he denominates the short and obtuse sound, as in *fir*, *sir*, *bird*, *virtue*. This sound, we believe, is confined to the vowel as followed by the letter *r*, and does not extend to a great number of words. The larger part, we think, are words compounded of *circum*, and other words derived from the Latin; being generally, also, Latin compounds with *circum* already formed in this language, and merely changed to English forms.

To the sounds of *o* noted in Walker's table Mr. Worcester adds *o* like short *u*; as in *son*, *done*, &c. The former, having assigned no such sound to *o* in his key, was obliged to exemplify it in the words in which it is found by substituting short *u*, in spelling them according to their true sound.

To the letter *u* Mr. Worcester adds to the sounds exemplified in Walker's table the short and obtuse sound, as in *fur*, *turn*, &c., the vowel being followed by *r*. All the words of this class, by Walker's notation, are pronounced with *u* as in *tub*, a sound that does not agree with *fur*. Mr. Worcester adds also the sound of *u* in *rule*, *rude*, *true*, a class of words in which the vowel is preceded by *r*, giving it the sound of *o* in *move*. Between this sound and the common long sound of *u* there is, as Walker says in another case, "but a delicate difference." As we commonly pronounce the long *u* in *tune*, *tube*, and *lute*, we perceive little difference between these words and *rule*, *true*, &c. But as the sound of *u* long is modified by the initial consonants in *cube*, *mule*, and *pure*, which last word differs very perceptibly in sound from *poor*, the ground of Mr. Worcester's distinction is obvious. Walker was aware of the difference, and spells *rule*, and other words with *r* preceding the vowel, with *oo*, in order to exemplify the true pronunciation.

In Walker's table *y* is wholly overlooked. Mr. Worcester notes it long, as in *style*, short in *symbol*, short and obtuse in *myrtle*.

Having followed Mr. Worcester through his key to the vowel sounds, and taken some pains to examine its application to many words in the dictionary, we are able to speak with confidence concerning his system. It is a great improvement upon that of Walker, whose pronouncing dictionary has long been regarded as the standard in the United States. We think this is shown by the cursory remarks we have made in comparing the two systems. Walker's is evidently defective, and Worcester's appears to us to be as comprehensive as the nature of the subject permits it to become. In consequence of the completeness of his system, he applies the marks of the vowels in the key directly to the words in the dictionary in their true orthography, and is seldom obliged to have recourse to Walker's awkward method of spelling words in an altered orthography, merely to exemplify the pronunciation.

We have spoken thus far of the most determinate vowel sounds. In monosyllables, in the accented syllables of other words, and generally in the syllables upon which the secondary accent falls, the sound of the vowels is so distinct that their power can be marked with such exactness as to be readily comprehended. But in familiar, audible reading and recitation, in animated public speaking, and especially in free conversation, syllables are continually occurring, in which the sounds of the vowels are so indistinct, that it is impossible to settle them by the appropriate varieties of long and short sounds indicated in a key by figures or arbitrary marks. Even in regard to grave and solemn discourse, this cannot be done, in very many cases, without supposing great restraint and extreme stiffness on the part of the public reader or speaker. Walker, attempting to denote the sounds of the vowels heard so imperfectly by the distinct long and short sounds comprised in his table, instead of guiding us to the true pronunciation, makes it more uncertain than if it were left to accident. Indeed, in a great portion of unaccented syllables, the natural, we might almost say the unavoidable, pronunciation is such as to produce uniformity; and in proportion to the strength of the accented syllables, uniformity in the unaccented is more sure to follow. If, therefore, it were not for the appearance of acknowledging his system of notation of vowel sounds to be defective, the orthoëpist might as well leave the unaccented syllables generally to the natural play of

the organs of speech, without any key to the vowel sounds ; for it is impossible to note the degrees of obscurity, as they are variously affected by position, and by connection with different consonants.

In addition to the well defined vowels in his key, Mr. Worcester adds to each a mark for its obscure sound. This, with due limitations, is an improvement upon Walker, since it truly acknowledges that to be obscure which he vainly attempts to make clear. Still, we think Mr. Worcester may have extended this convenient notation too far, especially in regard to initial and final unaccented syllables. Take, for instance, the first syllables of the following words beginning with *a*, and pronounced with the consonant after it : — *abhor*, *abjure*, *ablution*, *accuse*, *accustom*, *advance*, *admit*, *alternative*. In deliberate speaking, we should say that the short sound of *a* in these words is distinctly heard. Systems of notation of sounds are made for those who sound all the syllables, except those in regard to which custom has already decided otherwise. If there is any truth in Voltaire's saying, — even after making all due allowance for the exaggeration, — that the English eat up half their words, it becomes those who respect their language to save as many as they can from being devoured. There are degrees of the obscure vowel sounds, which of course cannot be marked by separate notation. Thus, in the word *alternative*, cited above, if *a* in the first syllable is obscure, it is much more obscure in the penult. In final unaccented syllables, it is generally too obscure to be noted with the common short sound. Thus, in *palace*, it departs widely from this a sound and is usually pronounced *pal-is* ; *menace*, *men-is*. Followed by some of the other consonants, it has a sound like short *u* ; as *medial*, *seaman*, *pedlar*, *compass*. In polysyllables, its sound is generally very obscure in the penult or antepenult, without the accent ; as in *sanatory*, *temporary*.

In the beginning of a word, *e*, forming a syllable by itself, has the long sound, as *eclipse*, *elect* ; when it takes a consonant, it has the short sound, as *efface*, *employ*, *enjoy*, *erratic*, *exact*. In the last syllable it is short and obscure, as *chicken*, *kindred*, *kindness*. All these examples of the letter *e*, in the unaccented syllables, are noted by Mr. Worcester as obscure. The words chosen in the key to exemplify this obscure sound are *brier*, *fuel*, *celery*. But these sounds are

not alike. In *brier*, the sound is that of *e* in *her*, deprived of the accent ; in *celery* the penult is *e* long and obscure ; in *fuel* it is short and more obscure, and according to the common pronunciation sounds like *i* short.

The next vowel, *i* obscure, is exemplified in the key by *elixir*, *ruin*, *logic*, *ability*. In the last syllable of *elixir* we have the sound of *i* in *sir* ; in *ruin* and *logic*, of short *i* in *pin* ; and in the penult of *ability*, *i* obscure, approaching as near to its short sound as to any other.

Actor, *confess*, *felony*, represent in the key the obscure sound of *o*. In *actor* the vowel has no type in the key, to which it answers. This word, and many others ending in *or*, have the same sound of *o* before *r*, as *e*, *i*, and *u* have before the same letter ; as *her*, *fir*, *fur* ; and *actor* can be pronounced in no other way, except like *o* in *nor*, which is contrary to established usage. In *confess* we have the short *o* obscure, and in *felony* the long.

As examples of *u* obscure, we find in the key *sulphur*, *murmur*, each of which has the sound of the vowel, in the last syllable, the same as that in *fur* ; and *deputy*, in which it is long, as in *pure*.

For the obscure sound of *y* we have *truly*, *envy*, *martyr*, as examples. The *y* final, as it seems to us, retains its short sound, the same as that of *i* short, which is in a measure checked for want of a consonant to rest upon. In plurals, as in *abilities*, the sound of the vowel is prolonged, and is evidently the short sound, as in *his*. We find that we agree with two out of the six orthoëpists most frequently quoted by Mr. Worcester ; namely, Sheridan and Jones, who represent the pronunciation of *ability* thus, — a-bil-ŷ-tŷ. Walker spells the word, in order to indicate the pronunciation, a-bil-ē-tē. And here we are reminded of a remark, which has occurred to us frequently as one that ought to be made, that, wherever short or obscure *i* occurs in the penult or antepenult of polysyllabic words, Walker gives it the power of *e* long : — thus, bu'-tē-ful, ser-ku'-ē-tus, des'-pē-ka-ble, ed'-ē-tur, de'-ē-fi, fe-lis'-ē-tē, &c. This spelling of words a second time, with strange and sometimes ludicrous combinations of letters, is an awkward business ; but since we have begun to meddle with it, we will try our hand, and see whether we are able to compile, from the letters of our alphabet, an orthography which more truly represents the pronunciation of these

words ; for it is certain that no Englishman ever pronounced them according to Walker's notation. In attempting this, we chiefly regard the true accent, and the power of the letter *i*, which Walker represents by *ē*. Thus, beau'-tif-ful, des'-pik-a-ble, cir-cu'-it-ous, ed'-it-ur, de'-if-fy, fe-lis'-it-ty, as here spelled, and divided, seem to give the true sound of *i* short. In a matter so subtile, we would avoid dogmatism ; but it appears to us that in these, and in very numerous words like them, the true sound becomes obscured only by the rapid utterance of the syllable in question, and the want of vocal stress occasioned by the absence of accent.

The great variety in the notation of unaccented vowels among the authors of pronouncing dictionaries shows how futile it is, in many, if not in most, cases of this kind, to fix, by artificial methods, that in which they all agree in practice ; and of which custom, and the modes of articulation that are natural, or appear so from habit, have so established the pronunciation, that we can seldom deviate far, even by accident, if we agree in accentuation. To this agreement there are few exceptions. Mr. Worcester seems to have come pretty much to the same conclusion. After exhibiting a table of words to which he adds the pronunciation of Sheridan, Walker, Jones, Jameson, Knowles, and Smart, a curious piece of patchwork, we do not wonder that he determined to abandon them all, and to place the vowels of unaccented syllables in one category of obscure sounds. Having determined to do this, he did it with the same consistency which is a distinguishing excellence manifested in all the departments of his dictionary.

After presenting the table of words variously pronounced by the distinguished orthoëpists above named, Mr. Worcester remarks, that “they agree with respect to two of the most important points in the pronunciation of words ; namely, the syllable on which the accent is to be placed, and the quantity of the vowel in the accented syllable. Though, with regard to the mode of representing the pronunciation of most of the words, there is considerable diversity, yet it is doubtless true, that the pronunciation intended to be expressed differs, in reality, much less than it would seem to do ; and that, in numerous instances, these orthoëpists agreed much better in their practice than in their mode of indicating it.”

If, however, Mr. Worcester had chosen to apply to the

unaccented syllables generally his system of notation, which is much more comprehensive than Walker's, or any other that we have seen, containing all the legitimate vowel sounds, he would, if he had failed to satisfy himself, have succeeded far better than his predecessors in accomplishing the undertaking. Walker, in this particular, may often lead astray those who trust to his guidance without exercising their own judgment. Mr. Worcester, in the same particular, not professing to be an infallible guide, leaves what is necessarily obscure to be learned by imitation and experience.

Orthography, according to the full grammatical import of the word, should correspond exactly to pronunciation. That it falls far short of this in the English language is well known, and is lamented by all who have given any attention to the subject; but it is now the sole duty of lexicographers and good writers to preserve the orthography as it is, in all cases where it is established by general usage, and in case of diversity to regard analogy; and to be consistent, so far as they are not overruled by custom, with their own principles. No dictation on this subject, which aims at radical changes, can succeed. We can make no essential alterations in order to adapt orthography to the true sounds, which of themselves are not in all cases fixed by custom, but on the contrary are still fluctuating from accident or diversity of taste. London, says Mr. Worcester, the great metropolis of English literature, has incomparably greater influence than any other city in giving law to pronunciation. But in that great Babel, the concert must be very imperfect. The court, parliament, *coteries* of the fashionable and of the literate, though in some respects independent, yet acting upon each other indirectly, tend to produce diversity and change. It was in the early part of the last century, during the last days of Queen Anne, or soon after, that Swift said, — "In London, they clip their words after one manner about the court, another in the city, and a third in the suburbs; all which, reduced to writing, would entirely confound orthography." The great object should now be to hold fast what we have gained.

It was a favorite notion of Dr. Webster, that "such gradual changes should be made in orthography, as shall accommodate the written to the spoken language, when they do not violate established principles, and especially when they purify words from corruptions, improve the regular

analogies of a language, and illustrate etymology." This he said when he published his *Compendious Dictionary*, in 1806. In his quarto dictionary (1828), he made some changes, and suggested many others ; but in general to little purpose. He went far enough to create distrust, without effecting much as a reformer. Whoever has the curiosity to see wherein he made improvements, and in how many instances he failed in regard to consistency with his own principles, may be gratified by examining a review of this dictionary by Lyman Cobb (1831). It exhibits the proofs of the most thorough examination into a minute subject that we have ever met with. We trust that it has been in the hands of the learned editor who is about to publish a revised edition of the dictionary. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri.*

Mr. Worcester has made no arbitrary changes in the orthography. In regard to words of various or doubtful orthography, which are few compared with the whole number, he has taken into account the manner in which they are affected by etymology, analogy, the authority of dictionaries, and general usage, before forming his judgment. So far as we have been able to examine the vocabulary, we find that he has preserved great consistency in the orthography of words that fall into the same class in their respective formations. In his introductory essay on orthography, he has inserted a list of about fourteen hundred words, which are variously spelt. A considerable portion consists of such as are not in common use. Of such as are in daily use, — *daily, dayly*, is one of them, — the difference consists, in many words, in the first syllable being either *em* or *im* ; as *empower, impower* ; *en* or *in* ; *enquire, inquire* ; and in the commutation of *c* and *s*, and of *s* and *z*, in the final syllables and the derivative formations from them. The list is of frightful length, when first looked upon ; but when examined, the alarm diminishes, and the tendency, we think, is rather towards uniformity than increasing variety.

Whoever has felt the pains and pleasures of severe study must look with admiration upon the indefatigable etymologist, who devotes his days and nights to hunting up the pedigree of a word in an unbroken line from this age back to the time of Moses. " I am no herald to inquire of men's pedigrees, it sufficeth me that I know their virtues " ; so wrote a distinguished English patriot nearly two centuries ago. It is so with the bulk of readers. They care not for the lineal succes-

sion of their words ; they wish to know their virtues, and how they are used ; and a few illustrations taken from good writers are of more value to them than all the speculations of the learned philologists who hunt them in the dark through all their peregrinations.

We cannot read without commiseration, mingled with respect, the account which the learned Noah Webster gave of his toils in the study of etymology. The pursuit seems, in his case, for a long time to have amounted almost to a proof of monomania, which caused him to throw aside the vast pile of philological stores he had accumulated, as if they were nothing worth. Soon after he published his *Compendious Dictionary* (1806), he began to make preparations for a larger work. He commenced writing it, and went through two letters of the alphabet, before he found out that his work was labor lost. He began to be conscious of his ignorance of the origin of words, on which Bailey and Johnson, Junius and Skinner, had shed no light. He then put himself to the rack, and submitted to self-torture paralleled only in the example of the most distinguished saints of the Romish church in the Dark Ages. He thus describes the process :— “ Laying aside my manuscripts, and all books treating of language, except lexicons and dictionaries, I endeavoured, by a diligent comparison of words having the same or cognate radical letters, in about twenty languages, to obtain a more correct knowledge of the primary sense of original words, of the affinities between the English and many other languages, and thus to enable myself to trace words to their source.” But, alas ! here were three or four years lost ; and not only so, but he was obliged to begin, as Quintilian says of those taught in the ancient arts by incompetent masters, with the harder part ; that is, by unlearning what was faultily acquired. He went back, he says, to the first rudiments of a branch of erudition, which he had before cultivated, as he had supposed, with success. Ten years more were spent in comparing the radical words ; and after completing the task, he says, — “ The result has been to open what are to me new views of language, and to unfold what appear to be the genuine principles on which these languages are constructed.” Happy is the man who feels, after approaching so near to martyrdom, that he has gained so rich a reward of his persevering labors.

Richardson is an etymological antiquary of a different

sort. He goes back to the earliest remains of English writers, of whom Robert of Gloucester, who lived in the time of Henry the Second, and wrote in the latter part of the twelfth century, is the most remote. Next come Gower and Wiclif, about the middle of the fourteenth century. From these he traced down such words as he could find, in their primitive, derivative, and altered forms, to the present time, aiming to give an historical view of their radical, consequential, and metaphorical senses.

Mr. Worcester has generally omitted the Saxon etymons in the etymological department of his dictionary, and noted only those derived from other northern dialects, and in general all of strictly foreign origin, from the ancient and modern languages. Of technical and scientific words, derived in great part from the Greek, he commonly gives the original, whether simple or compound. Among the omissions in this particular we notice *æsthetics*. He gives the original of *dynamics*, and the compound *hydrodynamics*, but omits that of *aerodynamics* and *dynameter*. Of the compounds, *aerostatics*, *aerolite*, and *lithoxyle* are omitted. The original words in these examples are indeed all Greek, which the learned can supply, and which the mere English reader does not want. The clear definitions given by Mr. Worcester of these and other scientific words are all that the common reader needs. Still, we should have been pleased to see the original etymons inserted.

Besides the new words introduced into his dictionary, with their pronunciation and exact definitions, Mr. Worcester has carefully revised the definitions in the vocabulary of his own edition of Todd's Johnson, and many of them, particularly the technical and scientific terms, have been defined anew. So far as we have been able to examine the definitions in different parts of the vocabulary, we have found them very exact and intelligible, and those pertaining to the arts and sciences are exceedingly valuable. Of words that are used in a sense or idiom peculiar to the United States, not very numerous, Mr. Worcester, so far as we have looked for them, has barely stated the peculiarity, and has not given them notes of approbation or of apology, or of a claim to a meaning that approximates to that which is sanctioned by general usage.

For no inconsiderable period of coming time, this dictionary,

carefully and judiciously elaborated by the author, and in the mechanical execution and the revision of the press remarkably correct, even as to the minute diacritical marks, cannot fail to be received with wide acceptance. Mr. Worcester is already known and valued as the author of the *Comprehensive Dictionary*, published sixteen years ago, a convenient manual, approved by all who have used or examined it. A large portion of the intermediate time has been devoted by him to preparation for this larger work, which is far more complete than any other of the kind ; and although, in the progress of the arts and sciences, of invention, and it may be, of intellectual philosophy, it is doubtless destined at some time beyond our ken to be superseded, we may confidently predict that it will survive one generation.

ART. VII. — *Urania, a Rhymed Lesson, pronounced before the Mercantile Library Association, October 14, 1846.*

By OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES. Second Edition.
Boston : W. D. Ticknor & Co. 8vo. pp. 32.

THIS is the modest and rather enigmatical title of a very lively and beautiful poem. The public have anticipated our favorable verdict upon it ; though less than three months have elapsed since its delivery, it has already passed to a second edition. It may have attained a third for aught that we know, as the first issue was exhausted almost as soon as it was announced. In these prosaic times, when quite good poetry is absolutely a drug in the market, and fugitive rhymes are so very fugitive that they are forgotten about as quickly as they are uttered, that a poet should so speedily acquire and retain the ear of the public is an indication either of remarkable ability, or of still more remarkable good fortune. In the present state of the reading world, immediate popularity, we believe, is no bad proof of the excellence of poetry, though it would certainly be a very insufficient test of merit in the case of philosophy or science. He who sings for the public, and cannot find a grateful audience, would do better to keep his music to himself. If the multitude neglect him, it is pretty